

08-365 1325

Oral History-Susan Davis

Green valley School History Day

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Very quickly give me information about your family? Whatever sequence you want to do there.

SD: My dad who went to Green Valley School, he his family came from Germany. And sometime in the 1800's. My dad was born in Freestone, California in 1899. And in the early 1900's they moved to Green Valley. He went through eight years of school there. I was born in 1939 in Tenure (?) Hospital in Santa Rosa. I lived on, where I live now, Green Valley Road. I went through eight years of school through Green Valley School, and so did two of my brothers, Albert and Dan.

All three of you graduated from Green Valley also?

Yeah, right.

What year did you graduate from Green Valley?

Hum, In 1953, my brother Al graduated in 1952. My brother Dan graduated in 1954.

You don't have to wait for me, you can just go ahead and can go at length

SD: My grandparents on my father side was born in Germany. My grandparents on my mother side were born in Denmark.

What were their names?

SD: My grandparents on my mother side were Anna and Neils Nelson , and on my father side it is was Herman and Ann. I went to Green valley school for eight years and it was great, enjoyed it. Walked to school and rode our bikes to school, sometimes rode our horse to school. The people in the community did all of the up keep of the yard. And when it was time when it was time to put on a roof, they took up the roofing materials and went down on the weekend and put a roof on the school. When it was time to paint, we all went down there, including the kids and help paint the inside and outside of the school. There were two teachers when I went to school. One teacher was a teacher, principle and probably a janitor all at the same time.

BS: And that person was. who was that person? What was his/her name?

SD: Let me think. I was in the first grade I had a teacher names Mrs. Irish. When I was in the second grade through the fourth grade my teacher was Losch. I believe she had also went to green valley school. The teachers in the older grades one of them was a very poor teacher and his name was Smith. I don't remember. One of the other teachers name was Hoff. He was a good teacher.

BS: Mr. Smith was a poor teacher meaning that he wasn't a very good instructor not that he was poor with no money.

SD: No, He was not a very good instructor.

BS: (laugh) Yeah. Going back to putting the roof on the school, did that happen during the time you were in school? Do you remember?

SD: I know that they did one time when we were in school. My dad was one of the trustee when I was in school. Leslie Sc? Was a trustee. Louis Maxis Senior was a trustee when I went to Green Valley School.

BS: Do you remember any special friends that you went to school with?

SD: I'm still best friends with Margie Maxis, who was in my class. Her dad and my dad were best friends when they went to Green Valley school in the early 1900's. Her daughters are very good friends. And my grandchildren are good friends. (laugh) so its gone down four generations of friends.

BS: That's neat. What are your daughter's name? What are you children's name?

SD: My children's names? I have a son name Ken Davis and a daughter named Shirley Mattei..now. Another daughter named Sandra Scott.

BS: How old are they?

SD: Hum, Ken is 41, Shirley is 38, and Sandy is 36.

BS: Amazing young looking for these older children. (laughter) I thought you were my age and my children are in there 20's. I'm thinking to myself wow these people look great with these kids.

SD: I'm 60

BS: Only a couple more years to go. How many grandchildren do you have?

SD: four

BS: Four grandchildren. Let's go back to Green Valley School. You said that you lived on Green Valley Road, how far was it to school then?

SD: Well, we usually cut through the fields. So between cutting through the fields it was three or four miles. We usually rode our bikes or our horse or whatever. One of the neighbors even drove once in a while and we would ride with them.

BS: What did you do with your horse during the day?

SD: We staked it out. Moved it around to get to mow the grass there..

BS: That's neat.

SD: Yeah. I would tie it up one place, and it would eat in a circle and then the next few days and tie it someplace else. It was a well-behaved horse.

BS: Did anyone else ride their horse to school?

SD: Umm, I don't think so.

BS: What was the name of your horse?

SD: Tuffy

BS: What was your favorite school subject or least favorite?

SD: My favorite was math, defiantly was math. My least favorite was history or geography.

BS: When people say history to me today I say now you are history.

SD: I know, I know

BS: Now you are. Do you remember any special occasions, festivals, school functions that were a lot of fun? Or any parties? Christmas parties?

SD: They didn't have too many parties, they would have plays once in a while and things like that. They used to have petro parties? At the school Saturday nights. People all over the Sebastopol area and even some from Santa Rosa would come. We did that at various schools, certain Saturday nights at the month. They would played at Green valley school or ?? sometimes right here in the community center they would have pedro parties.

BS: Now would the whole family come? It was a serious of card games right?

SD: It is a card game. My whole family from the time, wherever my parents went we went too. We learned how to play peadro when we were like six years old something like that. We could play like most of the adults did, even better sometimes. To this day I can play cards games, and I remember every card in the deck and if its been played or not played.

BS: That is really your skill. That's neat.

SD: I ended up being a bookkeeper.

BS: There is that last question. What did you do in your adult life? After you graduated from Green Valley.

SD: I went to Analy high school. Graduated from Analy.

BS: What year did you graduate from high school?

SD: 1957.

BS: And, hum. Did you start working right after high school as a bookkeeper? Or did you do other things?

SD: I worked as a Lab technician at Quad Canary. Then I worked as a bookkeeper and have been a bookkeeper ever since.

BS: How many years do you think?

SD: that I have keeping books?

BS: uh-huh

SD: Actually, I guess I started doing some book work in 1958 for someone that lived next door to us.

BS: Have you worked for a business? Or do you go around do various businesses work as your own self employed?

SD: Well, there for a while I was self employed and I did book keeping for several different people. In the 1970's my dad got terminal cancer and so I quit taking care of books and took care of him and spent time with him. And of course he had a ranch and so then we he was really sick and he passed away, I was hauling apples and changing argualation pipes and feeding cows. And then we finally moved to the ranch because it was too much getting up in the morning get the kids off to school and go out and change argualation pipes and feed cows

and I would come home and just get done doing stuff and it would be time to go back and feed more cows and change argulation pipes spent all my time driving back and forth.

BS: Where were you living when you were driving back and forth?

SD: Near Sebastopol.

BS: Now you live on the family ranch?

SD: I live on the family ranch, where I was raised. Yeah.

BS: You and your husband continued to

SD: We have cattle and apples, yes. He takes care of that now.

BS: What's your husband's name?

SD: Erwin Davis. That's with an E.

BS: ERWIN? How did you meet your husband?

SD: On a blind date.

BS: Is his family from around here?

SD: UM, yeah, in fact after we were married we found out that his grandfather had built my grandfather's house in 1913.

BS: Wow! What was his grandfather's name?

SD: Heye Davis?

BS: How is that spelled?

SD: I'm not sure

BS: Is this related to the Davis road over in Forestville?

SD: They were from around this area his mother was one of the first people to graduate from the PCA in Graton. Um, yeah. His grandmother lived here in Graton. The house that his grandmother lived in is still here. And his dad was born in Duncan Mills. So we are both kind of local.

BS: And your father in law name is?

SD: Chess Davis.

BS: Duncan Mills?

SD: Out of Monterey Oak,

BS: Yeah, I know where it is, I was leading one of those 's'

SD: Duncan Mill or The 's' is on Duncans. Mill

BS: I'm just has confused. You meet on a blind date with some friends?

SD: My girlfriend in high school was dating my husband's cousin.

BS: What year did you get married?

SD: 1957.

BS: What else is there about Green Valley? I guess we should back track, and I'm going to ask one more time what was the most interesting thing that happened to you at Green Valley school?

SD: Hum, the most interesting thing. I'm trying to think of one special thing. I can't thing of one special thing.

BS: Did you have a special group of friends? How many people were in your class? In your grade? Do you remember?

SD: Well there was Margie Maxis, June Smith, Earl Smith is what he goes by actually, Don Whatos?...

BS: What was your first name?

SD: Isabelle. Joe Franklin, that's about it.

BS: There was six people in your class?

SD: hum, some had class had six and that was a big class. Some other classes only had two or one. So

BS: I went to school in country Michigan and that's how many people were in my class.

SD: I still see most of them. Most of them still live around this area. Most of them come to the Green Valley reunion that we have every year. The reunion started I don't know how many years ago, I can remember the first reunion that they had was a big turn out, big turn, they had it in this school, and lots of people came the Suvillians and Maxisms. Families that had been here the early 1900's and late 1800's....any way.

BS: That's pretty neat. You know I forgot to ask you what your husband did for a living?

SD: He worked for the Quad Canary and then he got a real estate licenses and sold real estate. Since the 70's he had been farming.

BS: What was the year that you moved at your home ranch?

SD: End of '71 first of '72, somewhere in there.

BS: Tell me the address, what is the number? You don't have to

SD: Are you going to publish that? I just assume not give you the number

BS: I was just trying to figure out where you were for my own purposes, but you are right. That's fine. What were you like as a child?

SD: A tomboy (laughter) I had to be. I had to be. You had to do the same chores your brother did. When you went to school you played baseball and football and whatever else because it took everyone there to make a team. Laughter.

BS: By the time you were in school did they let girls where jeans and things to school?

SD: We wore jeans all the time, very seldom wore a dress. Yeah.

BS: I was just wondering when that transactions was?>

SD: There were, the girls that lived on the ranches wore jeans. Some of the girls didn't live on the ranches, or didn't have all the chores or didn't ride their bikes to school they wore dresses. They didn't play baseball or football or any of those things.

BS: What did those girls do when everyone else was playing those games?

SD: Jacks and jump ropes,

BS: Alright. Did you have the experience when you were in school, the older children guiding the little kids or tutoring them? What was the relationship between the older kids and the younger kids?

SD: It depended on the teacher. As you were older and you finished your lesson you would I was good at math, so if one of the kids a couple grades needed help with math, yeah I would helped them with math, or give them the spelling words, correct their spelling words, just minor things.

BS: Did everyone kind of do that? Are just if you felt comfortable as a child doing that, would the teacher say, Susan would you like someone in the same grade?

SD: I think that they asked the people that were good at the subject the other children needed help with, our teacher knew. So yeah, there were other children that would help too.

BS: I was thinking of that being a way to build self confidence, maybe in a child that was good in one subject the teacher might say to that child would you help someone else, with history or whatever.

SD: I don't know. I don't know. I can remember helping people. Yeah. That's all that a bout all I can think of right now.

BS: That's quite a bit actually...

SD: They were our friends too, they were just more feminine, then

BS: So all the kids really all played together?

SD: Yeah. We jumped roped too.

BS: Right, a lot mixing of all the ages. How many kids were there at the same? In the whole school then?

SD: Probably less than thirty.

BS: You had two teachers for thirty children?

SD: Yeah. One teacher taught first through fourth. The another teacher taught fifth through eighth. I guess highlights of going to school was when the teachers didn't show up and we had substitutes. Kids would caught snakes or lizards or something and put them in the desk drawer and teacher open the desk drawer and there would be a creature in there.

BS: Oh no. (laughter) Great.

SD: Some didn't like that very well.

BS: That would be me.

SD: Yeah, I'm not too wild about them either. My grandkids love them.

BS: If you remember any particular issues when your father was a trustee? I don't know if you would has a child, but any particular things that came up?

SD: I know after I graduated from there at some point Oak Grove was trying to get Green Valley to consolidate with Oak Grove. And they had a election in Green Valley and they decided that they didn't want to consolidate with Oak Grove. It seemed like the superintend of school they would condemn the school they would close it. Consolidated it into Oak Grove, I don't remember the exact details. Then Oak Grove became over crowded. So one point and I don't remember which class was first. Green valley school was kindergarten and another point was eighth grade for a while. Even after it had to be condemned unsafe. They reopened it. I think that they just wanted the tax dollars from Green Valley school. Because there wasn't a lot of students but there was a lot of land involved.

BS: Right

SD: So there was a lot of angered parents. Some angered parents that lived in Green Valley, then there were others that lived in Green Valley and thought it was great because they were going to a bigger school, and had buses to ride and they didn't have to walk.

BS: I have been amazed that the school district survived as long as it did, because it has been many consolidation in Sonoma County in the 20th century probably even at the end of the 19th century. So it been amazing to me that parents are always hold on and always supporting that school.

SD: Oh yeah. They used to have parent club meetings, and cupcake sales, and that's how they would raise most of the money for that school. I guess they got some tax dollar stuff to help pay for some things but parents pitched in, they cut the grass, and took care of the grounds,

and they did the cupcake sales and various other things to raise money to buy equipment and to fix up the school. I don't think any of the trustees got paid for it like they do now. They get paid and get health benefits. It was all voluntarily thing, where they decided what to do, hired the teachers, and paid the teachers, and whatever they had to do.

BS: A lot of responsibility for a community.

SD: One of the trustees is still alive, and that was Elise Schlock?

BS: That's right somebody mentioned that.

SD: Her daughter is here. I saw her when I came in.

BS: She lives back east now, doesn't she?

SD: Who?

BS: Elise?

SD: No, she

BS: Oh no, I'm confused then.

SD: Are you talking about Elise Hoppersnyder? That's my cousin.

BS: Oh I see. Okay. Yeah, as a

SD: Elise Schikek was a trustee for years for Green Valley School. And she is still alive. You can probably get some information from her.

BS: Generally did the trustees wanted to keep that school going for as long as possible? They weren't, or do you remember any of the trustees being in the group that wanted to closed the school?

SD: Not the trustees, not my dad, not Elise, or whatever. I don't know who became a trustee after that. I got married and moved into town so I don't know who the trustees were.

BS: So in your memory it seems it though the Oak Grove trustees that probably tried.

SD: Yeah you would have to talk to some of the next generation after that. What actually took place when they closed the school done.

BS: Yeah, Interesting

SD: But...he might know, is here have you talked to him?

BS: I know who he is, I just heard him when he came in. I hope they do an oral history with him too.

SD: Yeah, his kids were in school. In fact his kids were some of the last that attended Green Valley school.

BS: Oh I see.

SD: Then I think that they finished, maybe graduated from Oak Grove. Well always, I gotta go.

BS: Great. I appreciate it. It was a great interview

SD: Oh thank you.

BS: I'm learning how to do this.

SD: I haven't been interviewed before.